



Meta Cushing - 1PZB <meta.cushing@gsa.gov>

Re: New London Harbor Lighthouse Construction and Zoning issues

1 message

Meta Cushing - 1PZB <meta.cushing@gsa.gov>

Fri, Oct 9, 2015 at 7:25 PM

To: [REDACTED] B(6)

No problem! Your concerns are local really which is where they can be resolved. Sincerely MC

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 9, 2015, at 4:19 PM, [REDACTED] B(6) > wrote:

My apologies for my poor typing. Of course I meant to say Ms. Cushing

[REDACTED] B(6)

On Oct 9, 2015 4:14 PM, [REDACTED] B(6) > wrote:

Ms. Fishing,

Thank you for your reply. However since I am not a party to any lawsuit, nor to my knowledge neither is the GSA, I don't understand why you are not able to answer my general questions. Could you please review your public disclosure policies and explain why this is not feasible, or simply answer the questions I have asked.

Thank you for your cooperation and concern on behalf of an interested and concerned citizen.

[REDACTED] B(6)

On Oct 9, 2015 1:36 PM, "Meta Cushing - 1PZB" <meta.cushing@gsa.gov> wrote:

Dear Mr. [REDACTED] B(6)

Since the New London Harbor lighthouse is now the subject of a lawsuit, it would not be appropriate to comment to you on local zoning, access and other difficulties and issues at this time.

Sincerely,

Meta Cushing
GSA Boston

On Thu, Oct 8, 2015 at 10:30 PM, [REDACTED] B(6) > wrote:

Dear Ms. Cushing and Ms. Halda,

Below please find a letter that I submitted to the New London Zoning Board of Appeals regarding present and planned activity at New London Harbor Lighthouse. Since taking over stewardship of the physical plant, the Customs House Museum has done considerable work at the lighthouse that did not obtain appropriate city construction approvals and in many ways seemed to violate not only property rights of neighbors, possible building code standards, Coastal management regulations, but also ADA standards, local parking regulations, consideration of the R-1 designation of the neighborhood which is 100% residential, and in general has not taken into consideration or concern the neighborhood pedestrian, bike and beach activity that frequents the neighborhood year round. They have offered numerous paid tours, partnered with Segway tours, maritime tours, and have

proffered what appears to be false information about a possible previous dock at the lighthouse as well as information that would purport that there had always been numerous tours of the facility. In all of my years of living in New London there was not a single visit to the lighthouse with tours to the lantern room until the Customs House Museum began to offer tours at a price of \$35 per person. There were also no school visits to the lighthouse in all of the years that the Customs house Museum held the stewardship until just before the Zoning Board hearing this past month, yet they contend that our neighborhood is blocking their attempts at educating the local children, in spite of the fact that the City of New London has given them a Cease and Desist order for visitation activity due to numerous violations of city code. Further they state that the neighbors are blocking Coast Guard access to the light which is patently untrue.

Now it seems that their latest attempt is to get a designation as a historical monument instead of going for their original proposal of getting museum status. I have no idea what this means except to possibly avoid city regulations regarding safety, zoning and visitation rights to help fill their coffers.

My wife and I are gravely concerned as we have already seen many violations of local traffic and parking regulations by the Customs House Museum and are truly concerned for the safety of our grandchildren when they visit, and indeed all of the children and adults who utilize Pequot Ave for activities year round.

Please read the letter below and comment as to why you think that this may be occurring and what standards both of your organizations hold the Customs House Museum to as the stewards of this lighthouse.

Thank you very much for your time and concern.

B(6)

Zoning Board of Appeals RE: New London Harbor Light

Inbox x

Personal x



b(6)

Sep 16

Dear Ms. Keating, Ms. Briscoe, and the members of the Zoning Board of Appeals,

My name is [REDACTED] I reside at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the New London [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Unfortunately my wife and I will be out of town at the planned meeting to discuss the Cease and Desist order regarding commercial activity at the New London Harbor Lighthouse, but we wanted to make our thoughts known. I am writing as a father, grandfather, physician, and lastly as a home owner on [REDACTED] I have lived at this address for just over 10 years. We have observed the activity regarding the repainting and other activities in and around the harbor light and also some of the events that have occurred on that premises. I will start by saying that Pequot Ave is one of the busiest, if not the busiest pedestrian and cycling street in all of New London. All year long there are constant walkers, bicyclists, joggers, dog walkers and parents with strollers going up and down the street in the vicinity of our house and the lighthouse. As well many cars slow or stop to take in the lighthouse, the surroundings and activity in the river.

In the summer this traffic significantly increases, along with many people crossing the street to get to Billard Beach. This includes many young children. As it stands now the traffic on Pequot Ave is already very heavy and traveling at much too rapid a speed. I have witnessed 2 vehicles parked on the street being "clipped" by other cars traveling on Pequot Avenue. In addition to that there are many unregistered motor scooters and motorcycles

(usually driven by teens) that travel at rapid speeds. This has been reported to the police personally by me, and I was told by a patrolman that with present staffing levels this issue was not a priority. Add to that the fact that the lighthouse is located on a dangerous curve where we have all witnessed people parking illegally to attend lighthouse events. I firmly believe that a dangerous situation exists and that an untoward event will not be long in coming. During a large lighthouse event cars and motorcycles were parked on both sides of Pequot Avenue making passage difficult. In fact our trash could not be picked up properly that day as the truck could not easily pass. I was assured by someone from the New London Customs House Museum that the event would be very quick (15 or 30 minutes) but yet 2 hours later just about all of the illegally parked vehicles were still there, and not one was ticketed. As well since there is no sidewalk on the eastern side of the street people were walking on my property to avoid being on the road where the travel area was very narrow. As an aside the sidewalks on the western side of the street are in very bad repair and have only gotten worse in the years that I have been a resident. There are numerous tripping hazards which frequently force walkers into the street. This is at best a very unsafe situation not only for my grandchildren but in fact for any child or other pedestrian that happens by. Not just as a parent, but also as a physician who has spent many hours in Hartford working with the legislature on public health issues this is not a situation that should be allowed or an activity to be condoned.

One other point that needs to be placed out in the open is that many, if not most lighthouses that are located in residential zones do not allow tours. You need look only as far as the inner and outer lighthouses of Old Saybrook Harbor to see that tours are not given there. Even in the Customs House Museum mailings they recently mentioned a lighthouse in western CT that would be open for one day only as it is not open for tours in general. As a mariner I appreciate the function that the lighthouses perform and in fact have called Coast Guard Section New Haven (the post in charge of all aids to navigation) to report malfunctions of both the Harbor Light and Ledge Light. They responded appropriately and have never been denied access. Lighthouses serve a purpose, but one of those purposes is not allowing potentially dangerous activity in and around them on land.

Finally, I moved to New London from Madison to enjoy the benefits of this city and the neighborhood in which my house is located. It is a residential neighborhood of single family homes, and a commercial enterprise of the nature being proposed by the Customs House Museum should not be allowed in this setting if simply for the fact that it will impact the character and serenity of this seaside setting that is enjoyed by so many citizens of New London.

I thank you for your time in reading my concerns and hope that the appropriate action will be taken after due consideration.

B(6)




Meta Cushing - 1PZB <meta.cushing@gsa.gov>

New London Harbor Lighthouse

1 message

Wed, Oct 7, 2015 at 1:00 PM


To: "Meta.Cushing@gsa.gov" <Meta.Cushing@gsa.gov>

When the lighthouse was given to the New London Maritime Society what are the rules for them to have it used for persons visiting. They are wanting to have up to 500 people per year. The light is in a residentially area with limited parking. I was told they could have two days only of persons visiting per year. Now they want to change if from a lighthouse to a Museum to get around all the rules. Do you tell these group they have to follow the rules that are set when they are given the lighthouse or can they just do what they want.


B(6)



Meta Cushing - 1PZB <meta.cushing@gsa.gov>

Letter Regarding the New London Harbor Lighthouse

1 message

Fri, Oct 16, 2015 at 3:25 PM

Reply-To: [REDACTED]

To: "meta.cushing@gsa.gov" <meta.cushing@gsa.gov>

Dear Meta Cushing,

My wife [REDACTED] and I are the owners of [REDACTED] in New London Connecticut. We live diagonally across the street from the New London Harbor Lighthouse. We consider ourselves very fortunate to be able to enjoy our view of this majestic Lighthouse on a daily basis. We also certainly don't want to discourage others from admiring its beauty and history but there has to be a plan in place that complies with both city and state laws. Accordingly, this letter is written to document our concerns over the current and proposed additional usage of said Lighthouse by the New London Maritime Society (NLMS).

I moved back to New London in 2003 after building our current home. I grew up on [REDACTED] in New London and lived there from [REDACTED]. I also returned to the city most weekends from [REDACTED] when I returned to live in the city. I call New London my home and have a great deal of affection and love for this truly great city. As a young boy, I would frequently visit the Lighthouse and talk to Mr. Bunner who was the Lighthouse caretaker during the 1950's and 1960's. He would periodically allow me and my neighborhood friends to visit the Lighthouse grounds and yes, I did get to go into the Lighthouse proper once which is something that I will never forget.

I also vividly remember the owners of the adjacent Castle property generously allowing myself and other youngsters in the neighborhood to play on their trampoline which they had placed on the beach area in the back of their home. My family was also a member of Billard Beach Association which is just north of the former Castle property. I was at that beach nearly every beach day during the summers of my youth. During that time, I never saw a dock adjacent to the Lighthouse as the NLMS alleges existed. Furthermore, I never saw a Lighthouse dock as the NLMS alleges in a period of over sixty years. Quite frankly, the Lighthouse was an area that was considered "off limits" or sacrosanct – unless of course Mr. Bunner let you visit on one of those rare occasions. If one did get to visit the grounds or were fortunate to go into the Lighthouse one just never spoke about it publically. There were no tours or organized visits. It was just an area where one could look and admire the beauty of the building, occasionally take a picture of it but never ever enter the premises – that was just taboo.

Since the NLMS was granted ownership of the Lighthouse, I/we have witnessed increased levels of activity and visits to this site. We welcomed the entire Lighthouse restoration project and applaud all who were involved as we know the end result was a much-needed face lift to an aging historic landmark that was positioned at the entryway to New London harbor. However, since this restoration we have also witnessed the increased activity and visits to the Lighthouse that gives us many, many concerns. These concerns are listed below:

1) The surrounding property owners currently pay some of the highest property taxes in the city of New London based on the beautiful area we live in. Current and future projected increased tours to the Lighthouse – regardless of the visit's purpose, has and will change the surrounding area from a residential zone to a commercial zone. The increased activity has and will undoubtedly continue to reduce the surrounding properties value and resalability. Should the NLMS cease and desist order appeal prevail and the attendant tours etc. continue, I plan on pursuing legal matters to get our property changed to a commercial property and have the our property taxes relaxed accordingly.

2) There is also an inherent huge safety concern due to the very limited parking in the surrounding area of Pequot Avenue. This narrow street area cannot support the increased parking needed for the current tour activity nor can it support further increased activity. As mentioned, the street area is very narrow and the increased parking is just inviting vehicular mishaps. This situation is greatly exacerbated during the summer months when the increased tours are likely to happen. Pequot Avenue is a very busy thoroughfare. This summer Ocean Beach Park saw one of its busiest summers in decades and my wife and I saw traffic backed up on Pequot Avenue well past our home stretching as far as the Montauk Avenue intersection. We also saw frustrated motorists losing their patience while idling in traffic and finally pulling out and driving very fast the other way down Pequot Avenue. We hope, we really hope, that none of these instances occur when there are school children visiting the site. We all know that children have a tendency to wander and the street is an area where they might well wander to and this will be a tragic accident waiting to happen. Again, for us, PUBLIC SAFETY is a huge concern in this matter.

3) We, the neighbors, have never been informed or asked to attend a meeting by the NLMS as to their intentions for the use of the Lighthouse. We are now left with the feeling that their inaction was either intentional (as they just didn't want us to know what they were planning to use the Lighthouse for) or just didn't care what we thought.

4) We now realize that the NLMS figuratively "thumbed their nose" to the city of New London by failing to obtain the proper permits for the work they performed in and around the Lighthouse property. We also find it incredulous that this same agency never complied with the city's requests

via the Zoning Board's executive officer for information and documentation regarding their alterations to the existing property. These requests were many and over an extended period of time – all with the assurance that the NLMS would provide said data. Had we as property owners did the same we certainly would have been fined or worse for far lesser actions.

5) This situation has become more and more intolerable as time goes on. We have seen the Segway tours increase from once or twice/week to seemingly every day from early spring to late Fall. We have seen more and more school bus tours occur both during the regular school year and during the summer school sessions. We have seen more and more parking on the street during the Lighthouse tours – many times in violation of the posted parking signage. We are left with the perception that the NLMS just considers itself above the law. We are also left with the perception and that their representatives can disrespect the neighbor's property rights and could care less what we think, feel or care about.

In summary, we had hoped that this situation would never escalate to the level it is now at. Unfortunately, we are now in the position of doing whatever it takes to protect both our rights as nearby property owners and to also protect this beautiful and peaceful area of the city.

Sincerely,

B(6)



Meta Cushing - 1PZB <meta.cushing@gsa.gov>

New London Harbor Light and the New London Maritime Society

1 message

Wed, Oct 28, 2015 at 12:02 PM

B(6)

To: "Bonnie_Halda@nps.gov" <Bonnie_Halda@nps.gov>, "meta.cushing@gsa.gov" <meta.cushing@gsa.gov>

Dear Ms Halda and Ms Cushing,

I am a neighbor to the New London Light.
Please see my attached letter.
Thank you,

A litigious maritime society drops one lawsuit, files another



A litigious maritime society drops one lawsuit, files another

In its extensive, detailed 2004 application to obtain the historic New London Harbor Light, under terms of the National Historic Lighthouse

View on www.theday.com

Preview by Yahoo

Please see links to the articles in the Day paper

Maritime Society made misleading claims about proposed lighthouse dock

Maritime Society made misleading claims about

In its campaign over the summer to raise matching funds for a state grant to build a dock at its Pequot Avenue lighthouse, the

New London Maritime

View on www.theday.com

Preview by Yahoo

Dear Ms Halda and Ms Cushing,

I own the home located at [REDACTED] B(6) The surrounding neighbors and I are trying to understand your "hands off" approach to the conflicts we are having with the New London Maritime Society (NLMS). You have both been contacted by several of the affected neighbors and one was told by Ms Halda, "The New London Maritime Society completed an application for stewardship of the New London Harbor Light, which was reviewed by the National Park Service, and approved by the Secretary of the Interior, who recommended conveyance by the General Services Administration." I am well aware of that fact and don't need a cookie cutter answer to a serious problem. The response from Ms Cushing was no better, "Your concerns are local really which is where they can be resolved." Unfortunately, when the Zoning Board of Appeals tried to make the NLMS conform to proper rules governing the property, the NLMS sued them. The terms of the lighthouse application the NLMS filed to acquire the New London Harbor Light were clearly defined and demanded that rules be followed or a reversion of the property could be undertaken. The NLMS has violated many key parts of their agreement with the governing body, the NPS, which has ultimate jurisdiction over them. Ignoring local zoning laws is only one of the infractions.

In the Courant article from 9-25-15, Ms Tamulevich can't understand why the neighbors don't want hordes of people in their residential neighborhood, again ignoring the impact of their actions on those who live in the vicinity. Attorney Casey makes the absurd claim that "here we are defending the idea that a property owner can bring people to visit their own property." He also defies that his client is bound by local zoning.

<http://www.courant.com/business/hc-trb-new-london-lighthouse-debate-20150925-story.html>

Maritime Society Director Susan Tamulevich was in tears as she spoke about the missed opportunities caused by the ongoing legal disputes and said she was baffled by the opposition to opening up the lighthouse to school groups and visitors, at no charge.

Society attorney John Casey, who also represents the organization in the federal lawsuit, spent 45 minutes at Thursday's meeting talking about historical uses of lighthouses and argued it is a "pre-existing nonconforming use," and therefore legally protected.

Comparing the situation to a homeowner inviting over guests, Casey said, "here we are defending the idea that a property owner can bring people to visit their own property."

He also hinted at the fact that he will argue in federal court that the lighthouse might in fact be exempt from all local zoning laws if he can prove it is being used in the same way it was by the federal government before its transfer.

The above reference clearly shows your steward has no concern for others affected by their actions and that they seek to defy the local rules which you say they must adhere to.

There are several violations in the contract that the NLMS signed with the NPS to gain ownership of New London Harbor Light. Of note are these points, the NLMS would not seek zoning variance or operate commercial ventures at the site, and they would actively seek approval and input from the surrounding neighbors. The City of New London recognized the tremendous intensification of use and the commercial activities with no buffers, parking, or setbacks from the adjoining residences and issued a Cease and Desist in June 2015. The order was appealed and the city's zoning board of appeals met on 9/24/15 and unanimously upheld the Cease and Desist order. Among problems cited were as follows:

- 1) There was extensive construction done at the site which the NLMS did without permits of any kind.
- 2) There was a 1000 fold increase in use of the property by the public which had never been permitted before.
- 3) In all of the NLMS' arguments, not once did they mention the impact of public access on surrounding neighbors.
- 4) From photographs submitted as evidence, the zoning board recognized that the abutting neighbors had lost all privacy with new public access to the lighthouse.
- 5) The zoning board acknowledged that the NLMS acted with arrogance and defiance toward any governing body and refused any regulations. The NLMS' attorney even went so far as to say that he wasn't sure that the zoning authorities had any jurisdiction over his client.
- 6) The NLMS has appealed the zoning board's decision to State Court.
- 7) The NLMS has sued the New London ZBA for its decision to uphold the Cease and Desist
- 8) The NLMS wants to have the New London Harbor Light declared a historical monument, we presume so that they won't have to conform to local zoning laws.

In the Correspondence folder of the NLMS' application, there is a letter from Dr. Pitcaithley states that "this application will become the binding agreement between the Society and the Federal government for the use and maintenance of the property, it is essential that it be comprehensive and complete prior to the transfer of the light station." If it is a binding agreement, why do you ignore the violations in the agreement? Dr Pitcaithley also states "The intent of NHLPA does not require that persons be able to climb to the top of a light tower. With no landings or gallery for viewing except the one around the lantern (which can only be accessed by entering the lantern with the priceless Fresnel lens) allowing climbing might not be advisable for this particular light tower.

Susan Tamulevich, NLMS director, has waged a vicious public campaign against the neighbors, claiming that NLMS and the USCG were denied access to the lighthouse. The NLMS built a solid granite wall across the entire width of their

property, expecting to trespass across the lightkeeper's property (owned by the Rings) and along the pool enclosure of the Waesche's property to the north. It is their own wall which is obstructing access to the lighthouse. Ms. Tamulevich claimed the NLMS was going to restore a dock (that never existed) to gain access to their lighthouse and began a fund raising drive to build a dock for which she had no permits. This would add a commercial dock to the water enjoyed by many residents of the area. She raised enough money to be awarded CT's "Good to Great" Grant. Through Facebook, articles in the Day Paper, Antiques and the Arts Weekly, fliers circulated at businesses throughout New London, and a campaign full of falsehoods on <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/a-dock-at-new-london-harbor-pequot-light#/story>, she continues to inflame the public.

So, when your steward not only ignores its agreement with you, defies local zoning, tries to establish a commercial dock in a residential area, wants to change the lighthouse to a "historical monument", and answers to no one, at what point would a reversion investigation be initiated? I can't understand why you can't do your own investigation and see the havoc your steward is creating in this community and with the ZBA lawsuit, the additional burden they are imposing on the taxpayers of this city.

With Regards,

b(6)